

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method for paying a proper amount of postage comprising:
 - estimating, using a computer accessing a website associated with a mail delivery system, a postage amount necessary to send a mailpiece;
 - prepaying, through the computer accessing the website, for the estimated postage amount;
 - printing, using a printing device, a postage indicia that represents the estimated postage amount, an addressee information, a sender information, a unique postage number that uniquely identifies the postage indicia and prevents duplication of the postage indicia, a unique delivery confirmation number that uniquely identifies the mailpiece, and a date,
 - wherein the postage indicia represents the estimated postage amount in a format readable by machine only, ~~and represents the address information, the sender information, the unique postage number, and the unique delivery confirmation number in a human readable format and~~
 - wherein at least one of the unique postage number and the unique delivery confirmation number is associated with billing information of a sender;
 - affixing the postage indicia to the mailpiece;
 - ~~mailing~~ delivering the mailpiece through the mail delivery system; and

paying an adjusted postage amount, subsequent to the delivering mailing of the mailpiece, in response to a bill.

2. (Previously Presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein prepaying the estimated postage amount comprises prepaying the estimated postage via the Internet.

3.-4. (Cancelled)

5. (Previously Presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein the format readable by machine only comprises a bar code format.

6. (Previously Presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein the unique postage number is used to verify that the postage indicia has not previously been used on a second mailpiece.

7. (Withdrawn) A method of adjusting an amount of prepaid postage on a mailpiece, wherein the mailpiece comprises a postage indicia including an indication of an initial postage amount, comprising:

receiving a payment for the initial postage amount;

receiving the mailpiece, wherein the postage indicia includes the initial postage amount, billing information of a sender, and a unique postage number in only a machine readable format;

verifying that the initial postage amount is the proper amount;
updating a database to associate the billing information with the unique postage number;
using the billing information to bill a party for an adjusted postage amount, if the initial postage amount is not verified; and
altering the postage indicia to reflect the adjusted postage amount, once the party has been billed for the adjusted amount.

8. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 7, wherein the payment for initial postage amount is received via the Internet.

9.-10. (Cancelled)

11. (Currently Amended) A system for preventing postage fraud comprising:
means for receiving an estimated postage amount necessary to send a parcel;
means for electronically prepaying the estimated postage amount;
means for outputting a postage indicia comprising a unique postage number that uniquely identifies the postage indicia, a unique delivery confirmation number that uniquely identifies the parcel, and a stealth postage, the stealth postage comprising the estimated postage amount in a format readable by machine only; and
means for electronically paying for an adjusted amount of postage subsequent to delivering mailing of the parcel,

wherein at least one of the unique postage number and the unique delivery confirmation number is associated with billing information of a sender.

12. (Original) The system of claim 11, wherein the means for electronically prepaying comprises an Internet payment service.

13. (Original) The system of claim 11, further comprising a printer for printing the postage indicia.

14. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 11, further comprising a processor for encoding the stealth postage.

15. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 11, wherein the format readable by machine only is a bar code format.

16. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 15, wherein the bar code format is a two-dimensional bar code format.

17. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 11, further comprising means for verifying that the postage indicia has not previously been used on a second parcel.

18. (Withdrawn) A system for adjusting an amount of prepaid postage on a mailpiece, comprising:

means for receiving a payment for an initial postage amount;

means for receiving a mailpiece, including a postage indicia, wherein the postage indicia includes the initial postage amount, billing information of a sender, and a unique postage number in only a machine readable format;

means for verifying that the initial postage amount is the proper amount;

means for updating a database to associate the billing information with the unique postage number;

means for billing a party for an adjusted postage amount, if the initial postage amount is determined to be improper; and

means for altering the postage indicia to reflect the adjusted postage amount, once the party has been billed for the adjusted amount.

19. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 18, wherein the payment for initial postage amount is received via the Internet.

20. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method for adjusting postage on a mailpiece, comprising:

estimating, using a computer accessing a website, an estimated postage amount necessary for the mailpiece;

transmitting, using the computer through a network, payment information for the estimated postage amount;

printing, using a printing device, a postage label including the estimated postage amount represented only in an electronically readable format and a verification

information including a unique postage number that uniquely identifies the postage label and a unique delivery confirmation number that uniquely identifies the mailpiece,

wherein the verification information is used by a mailing system to subsequently adjust the estimated postage amount, and

wherein at least one of the unique postage number and the unique delivery confirmation number of the verification information is associated with associates a sender's billing information with the mailpiece.

21. (Previously Presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 20, further comprising creating the postage label by producing a bar code containing the estimated postage amount, wherein the postage label further includes a date, an addressee information, and a sender information.

22. (Canceled)

23. (Original) The computer implemented method of claim 21, wherein the bar code is a two dimensional bar code.

24. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable medium storing instructions for implementing a method for adjusting postage on a mailpiece, the method comprising:
estimating a postage amount necessary for the mailpiece;
transmitting payment information relating to the estimated postage amount;

printing a postage label including the estimated postage amount represented only in an electronically readable format, and a verification information including a unique postage number that uniquely identifies the postage label and a unique delivery confirmation number that uniquely identifies the mailpiece,

wherein the verification information is used by a mailing system to subsequently adjust the estimated postage amount, and

wherein at least one of the unique postage number and the unique delivery confirmation number of the verification information is associated with associates a sender's billing information with the mailpiece.

25. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 24, wherein the method further comprises creating the postage label by producing a bar code containing the estimated postage amount, wherein the postage label further includes a date, an addressee information, and a sender information.

26. (Canceled)

27. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 25, wherein the bar code is a two dimensional bar code.

28. (Withdrawn) A system for preventing postage fraud comprising:
a mailpiece including a stealth postage indicia comprising a unique parcel number and a unique postage number;

a scanner for reading the unique parcel number and the unique postage number;

a database in communication with the scanner, for verifying that the unique parcel number and the unique postage number are assigned to each other; and an electronic interface for transmitting the postage indicia to a user, wherein the electronic interface is in communication with the database such that, upon purchase of the postage indicia by the sender, the database is updated with a record for the new postage indicia.

29. (Cancelled)

30. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 28, wherein the electronic interface is the Internet.

31. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 28, wherein the database further verifies that the unique postage number has not been used on a second mailpiece.

32. (Cancelled)

33. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 28, wherein the unique parcel number and postage number are compared to an parcel number and postage number retrieved from a new mail parcel that enters a shipper's system.

34. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 28, wherein the database is further updated with a new record for a new parcel scanned in by the scanner, wherein the new record comprises a unique parcel number and a unique postage number.

35. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 28, wherein the scanner is a portable scanner.

36. (Withdrawn) A system for verifying the proper postage on a mailpiece, comprising:

a mailpiece including a stealth postage indicia comprising a postage amount represented in a format not readable by humans;

a scanner for reading the postage amount;

a scale for weighing the mailpiece and determining the proper postage for the mailpiece; and

a billing interface in communication with the scanner and the scale for verifying that the postage paid is the proper amount, and, if not, transmitting a bill to a sender of the mailpiece for an adjusted amount and receiving payment for the adjusted amount.

37. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 36, further comprising an electronic interface for transmitting the stealth indicia to a user, and for receiving payment for the postage from the user.

38. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 37, wherein the electronic interface is the Internet.

39. (Withdrawn) A method of coding an amount of postage onto a mailing label whereby the postage amount can be read only by machine, and wherein the coded postage amount can be adjusted by the shipper system after acceptance of the mailpiece from the sender.

40. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 39, wherein the postage amount is represented in a bar code.

41. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 39, wherein the mailing label further comprises at least two unique numbers for preventing the unauthorized use of the postage label.

42. (Withdrawn) A method of dispensing fraud protected postage via the internet, comprising:

receiving an estimated weight for a parcel from a sender via a web page;
receiving payment from the sender for an initial postage amount for the parcel;

transmitting instructions to a user's computer for producing a stealth postage indicia, comprising at least two unique numbers, and wherein the stealth postage indicia represents the postage in only a machine readable form; and

verifying a postage label for a mailpiece by verifying the two unique numbers.

43. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 42, further comprising verifying that the initial postage was the correct amount.

44. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 43, further comprising billing the sender for an adjusted amount if the initial postage amount was not correct.

45. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 5, wherein the bar code format is a two dimensional bar code format.

46. (Previously Presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein the postage indicia further includes a human-readable printed notation indicating online payment of the estimated postage amount.

47. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 11, wherein the postage indicia further includes a human-readable printed notation indicating online payment of the estimated postage amount.

48. (New) The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein the postage indicia represents at least one of the unique postage number and the unique delivery confirmation number in a human readable format.

49. (New) The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein the postage indicia represents at least one of the unique postage number and the unique delivery confirmation number in a machine readable format.

50. (New) The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein the postage indicia represents at least one of the unique postage number and the unique delivery confirmation number in both a human readable format and a machine readable format.

51. (New) The system of claim 11, wherein at least one of the unique postage number and the unique delivery confirmation number is in a human readable format.

52. (New) The system of claim 11, wherein at least one of the unique postage number and the unique delivery confirmation number is in the format readable by machine only.

53. (New) The system of claim 11, wherein at least one of the unique postage number and the unique delivery confirmation number is in both a human readable format and the format readable by machine only.

54. (New) The computer-implemented method of claim 20, wherein at least one of the unique postage number and the unique delivery confirmation number is in a human readable format.

55. (New) The computer-implemented method of claim 20, wherein at least one of the unique postage number and the unique delivery confirmation number is in a machine readable format.

56. (New) The computer-implemented method of claim 20, wherein at least one of the unique postage number and the unique delivery confirmation number is in both a human readable format and a machine readable format.

57. (New) The computer-readable medium of claim 24, wherein at least one of the unique postage number and the unique delivery confirmation number is in a human readable format.

58. (New) The computer-readable medium of claim 24, wherein at least one of the unique postage number and the unique delivery confirmation number is in a machine readable format.

59. (New) The computer-readable medium of claim 24, wherein at least one of the unique postage number and the unique delivery confirmation number is in both a human readable format and a machine readable format.